

What is Restless Leg Syndrome (RLS)?

Restless Legs Syndrome (Ekbom Syndrome) is a sleep and neurological disorder characterized by a creeping or crawling sensation in the legs that tends to occur when an individual is not moving (especially in the evening). There is an almost irresistible urge to move the legs in an attempt to relieve the aforementioned uncomfortable sensations. This movement causes difficulty falling and staying asleep for sufferers and generally decreases their overall quality of life.

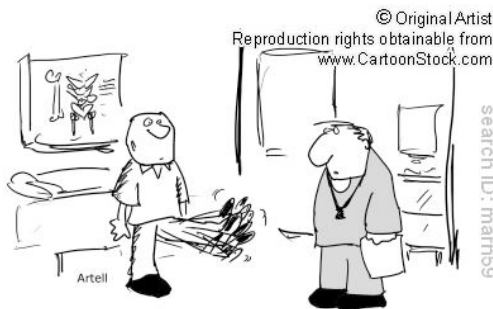


History of RLS

RLS was officially discovered in 1945 by the Swedish neurologist Karl Axel Ekbom. Ever since its discovery, it has been surrounded by controversy because it is notoriously difficult to tell apart from Nocturnal Leg Cramps especially when the symptoms are recent. Data from sleep centers has shown RLS to be progressive (gets worse) and the episodes vary in frequency.

Who is most likely to be affected by RLS?

Although there is no concrete statistic on the prevalence of RLS, experts in the field consistently state that RSL affects more than ten percent of the population. Smaller scale studies have shown its prevalence to be well over twenty percent in certain populations. People who are anemic, suffer from peripheral neuropathy, and women who are pregnant all have higher instances of RSL. Individuals with a family history of RSL are also predisposed to it as well. It was initially thought to affect the middle-aged population, but in recent years the prevalence in adolescents has greatly increased as well. Early onset RSL is often misdiagnosed as growing pains or ADHD in adolescents.



The tests suggest "restless leg" syndrome.

What are the most common symptoms of RLS?

In order to be clinically diagnosed with RLS, the individual must meet each of the criteria described:

- There is a strong, nearly irresistible, urge for the individual to move their legs.
- The symptoms become worse when resisted.
- The symptoms get better and temporary relief is provided when the individual moves their legs.
- The symptoms get worse in the evening especially as the individual's legs are stationary.



"Trust me dude, this Restless Leg Syndrome is like, seriously harsh."

What is Periodic Limb Movement Disorder (PLMD)?

PLMD is an intrinsic sleep disorder often associated with RLS. Sufferers have involuntary flexions of the ankles, knees, and hips and episode generally last a few seconds. About 80% of people with RLS also have PLMD, but it is still uncertain whether the two are directly related, or different solutions to the same problem.

How do I know if I have RLS?

The only way to know for sure if you are suffering from RLS is to go to your doctor or a sleep specialist and talk with them about it. The diagnosis for a trained professional should be fairly straight-forward and it can be diagnosed without a sleep study.



What are the treatment options available to someone with RLS?

There is no “cure” for RLS in the sense that it will never come back, however there are a number of pharmaceutical and non-pharmaceutical treatments available that can make patients feel better over night. The non-pharmaceutical treatments include: developing an exercise routine that helps you with RLS, eliminating alcohol and caffeine consumption, implementing good sleep habits/schedule. The pharmaceutical treatments are also perfectly viable ways of decreasing

the effect of RLS. The most specific type of treatment for RLS are medications like L-Dopa and Sinemet that affect dopamine neural systems. Other viable pharmaceutical treatments including sedatives and other pain-relievers have all been shown to increase comfort and decrease the severity of episodes for victims of RLS.

Where can I get more information about RLS?

- Your doctor
- A local sleep specialist
- Restless Legs Syndrome Foundation (www.rls.org) or (507) 287-6465
- National Institute of Health (http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/restless_legs/restless_legs.htm)
- National Sleep Foundation (www.sleepfoundation.org) or (202) 347-3472
- WE MOVE (Worldwide Education & Awareness for Movement Disorders) (www.wemove.org)
- www.restlesslegs.com



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Restless Legs Syndrome

Ever feel like you can't get a good night's sleep because of uncomfortable sensations in your legs?



Danny Organ
Sleep and Dreams Outreach Project
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TA: Kevin Morton
Professor: Dr. Dement